



IIPS

Public Lectures

22 July 2003

Capitol Tokyu Hotel, Tokyo

French Foreign Policy towards Europe and Japan

Speaker: His Excellency Bernard de Faubournet de Montferrand

Report by Yutaka Ohama (senior research fellow, IIPS)

On 22 July the Institute for International Policy Studies, with the assistance of the Nippon Foundation, hosted a speech on the topic of French foreign policy, delivered by Bernard de Montferrand, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Japan.

The ambassador began by describing France's existing foreign policy towards the European Union, and the increase in French foreign affairs activity in recent years that has resulted from EU enlargement. He stated that the most important factors underlying French foreign policy are the new global environment, the emergence of an international community that is extremely open, and the tremendous results that have been achieved thanks to the will of numerous countries and their participation in the decision-making process.



Clearly, one objective of French diplomacy is the defense of French interests—a concept that is not confined to the defense of material interests alone, but which also encompasses the notions of defending certain moral principles and of placing a premium on treasured national values.



French foreign policy has placed considerable emphasis on EU integration—an issue whose significance increased substantially with the collapse of the Soviet Union. EU integration is a profoundly significant proposition whose fundamental aim is European peace and security through amicable relations between France and Germany—two countries that have fallen into conflict several times in the past, throwing Europe into chaos in the process. Integration is also a basic requirement for European prosperity, and there are many

fine examples of integration in several different areas, such as continuing peace and security, and the strong currency. Individually the deutschmark and the French franc would be relatively weak as international currencies; however, monetary union—the adoption of the

euro—has afforded both countries a strong position internationally. Their ability to work together will also be highly beneficial in the face of other challenges, such as regional peace efforts and refugee problems. The EU has stepped up efforts to establish the infrastructure necessary to protect its own interests; this will in turn contribute immensely to global stability. Meanwhile, the union is expected to grow to 27 countries, with a combined population of 450 million: thus, it will become even more diverse than it is at present, necessitating a much more focused effort on integration. Hence, an EU executive branch—which will give integration a central focus—must be clearly delineated. A concrete executive branch will lend stability to integration and improve efficiency. A logical first step would be to create the post of EU foreign minister. In addition, transparency in all institutions must be increased and the will of the people clarified.

Ambassador Montferrand proceeded to discuss the importance of transatlantic relations. France has maintained an alliance with the United States that predates even the Declaration of Independence of 1776. The two countries have never made war on each other, enjoy strong ties under normal circumstances, and have generally maintained a harmonious relationship with one another. Today, transatlantic relations continue to be founded on Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. NATO was founded at a



time when Europe was weak and it served as a bulwark against the threat posed by the USSR. Since then, prosperity has returned to Europe, its unity has been strengthened, and the Soviet Union has collapsed (and thus ceased to pose a threat). These new conditions call for a thorough rethinking of NATO, and a new balance must be sought between politics, economics, and a host of other issues. These changes will be reinforced over the next 20 to 30 years, mutual understanding will run deeper, and the partnership will become stronger, allowing the transatlantic relationship to be restored to a sound footing once again. The EU will be successful in Bosnia, Macedonia, and other regions, will become more robust, and will lay the groundwork for multipolar stability within the international community.

In response to questions from the audience, the ambassador concluded by reiterating the importance of the European Union and the need for a positive attitude towards the resolution of outstanding issues.